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Viewing cable 06TELAVIV3196, IRAN DOMINATES OLMERT'S DISCUSSION WITH CODELS

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06TELAVIV3196	2006-08-14 12:50	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Tel Aviv

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[not](#)
[yet](#)
[set](#)

null
Carol X Weakley 08/16/2006 04:03:37 PM From DB/Inbox: Carol X Weakley

Cable
Text:

C O N F I D E N T I A L

TEL AVIV 03196

SIPDIS
CXTela:

ACTION: ECON

INFO: ADM AID IPSC SCI IMO CONS RES POL DCM AMB PD
FCS

DISSEMINATION: ECON
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:GCRETZ
DRAFTED: ECON:AABELL
CLEARED: POL:NOLSEN

VZCZCTVI302
OO RUEHC RUEHXX

DE RUEHTV #3196/01 2261250
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 141250Z AUG 06
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5602
INFO RUEHXX/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 003196

SIPDIS

CODEL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: IRAN DOMINATES OLMERT'S DISCUSSION WITH CODELS
MILLER AND ROYCE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Gene A. Cretz for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In an August 10 meeting, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert told CODELs Miller and Royce that the Israeli fight against Hizballah in Lebanon was part of a larger war against Iran and Syria. Olmert attributed Hizballah's battlefield strength to direct Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) leadership and armament, citing as evidence the IDF claim of Iranians among Hizballah casualties, as well as sophisticated anti-tank and anti-ship missiles being employed against Israeli forces. He assessed that Iran would have preferred to save Hizballah's strength for a time when Iran itself is directly threatened, rather than expose it now. He explained the Israeli decision to go to war over Hizballah's July 12 attack as a decision to deal with the Hizballah problem now, rather than merely "giving it lip service" and allowing it to become more dangerous in the future. Finally, Olmert expressed his preference for a political solution over a military solution to the conflict, as long as it could establish the conditions set forth in UNSCR 1559. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On August 10, CODEL Miller and CODEL Royce met with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in his Tel Aviv office. The combined CODELs opened the meeting by formally presenting the Prime Minister with a copy of a House Resolution supporting Israel's right to defend itself against aggression from Hizballah in Lebanon, and condemning Syria and Iran for their support of Hizballah. The Prime Minister gratefully accepted the resolution and emphasized the importance of American moral support for Israel during such a difficult time.

WEAKENING IRAN'S "STRATEGIC ARM"

¶3. (C) Olmert next told the CODEL that the current hostilities in Lebanon were part of a greater war against Iran and Syria, and not just a fight with Hizballah guerillas. He suggested that the Iranians had been surprised by Israel's strong reaction to Hizballah's July 12 cross-border attack. Calling Hizballah a "strategic arm" of the Iranian government, he said that Iran would have preferred to save Hizballah's strength for a time when Iran itself is directly threatened, rather than exposing it now. He explained the Israeli decision to go to war over the July 12 attack as a decision to deal with the Hizballah problem now, rather than merely "giving it lip service" and allowing it to become more dangerous in the future.

EVIDENCE OF THE IRANIAN PRESENCE

¶4. (C) The Prime Minister claimed that the IDF had proof that

high-ranking Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers were planning Hizballah operations and commanding Hizballah units in the field. He said that the IDF had found Iranian government identification cards on the bodies of some Hizballah casualties in Lebanon. Olmert also asserted that IRGC operatives, and not Hizballah fighters, had fired the Iranian C802 anti-ship missile that had damaged the Israeli warship off the coast of Beirut. He remarked that no guerilla army in history had been armed with as sophisticated weapons as those that Hizballah is employing in Lebanon, including cutting-edge, Russian-made, anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) that have been responsible for the majority of Israeli combat casualties.

A COMPARISON TO OCTOBER 1962

15. (C) Recalling his own memories of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Olmert commented that even without nuclear missiles, Iran had already been able to alter the lives of one million Israelis by making them refugees within their own country. He said that over 3,500 Hizballah rockets had landed inside Israel over the past month, causing over one billion USD in damage to Israeli infrastructure. He further suggested that the start of the Israeli school year, scheduled for September 1, might be delayed due to the mass evacuations from northern Israel. Olmert highlighted the recent public comments of Iranian President Ahmadinejad in Malaysia, who again declared that wiping the Jewish state off the map was the solution to conflict in the Middle East. He underscored the difference between Israel and Hizballah by saying that while Israel considers civilian casualties a failure, Hizballah considers dead civilians a measure of success. Rep. Shaw asked the Prime Minister how much longer Israel and the U.S. should continue to fight Iran's surrogates before taking direct action against Iran itself. The Prime Minister responded by saying that, "I've been talking with President Bush and Vice President Cheney about that very issue."

MAKING UNSCR 1559 A REALITY, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

16. (C) Olmert told the CODEL that he would prefer a political solution over a military solution to establish the conditions set forth in UNSCR 1559, but that those conditions must become a reality one way or another. Olmert indicated his support for the deployment of the Lebanese Army to the Israeli border, but stressed that the Lebanese Army would require assistance from an international force comprised of combat units from "capable countries" that could actually enforce UNSCR 1559. Olmert confided that he had been restraining IDF generals from pursuing more aggressive operations thus far, but if a political solution took much longer he would soon be forced to approve the beginning of a "major operation" to "complete the job" in Lebanon.

GOI MUST IMPROVE PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

17. (C) Rep. Royce and Rep. Johnson warned the Prime Minister that the GOI was currently losing the propaganda war with Hizballah in the media, and encouraged him to make public diplomacy a higher priority of his administration. Olmert agreed that Israel had not done an effective job stating its case in the court of international public opinion. He suggested that the media had not covered the suffering of the Israeli population because the GOI took care of its displaced citizens rather than begging for international help.

18. (U) Participants:
ISRAEL

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert
Senior Foreign Policy Advisor Shalom Tourgeman
Assistant Foreign Policy Advisor Ari Varon
MFA Deputy Director General Ambassador Yoram Ben Zeev

MFA Counselor Eyal Sela

U.S.A.

Rep. Jeff Miller (R-FL)
Rep. Nancy Johnson (R-CT)
Rep. Clay Shaw (R-FL)
Rep. Don Sherwood (R-PA)
Rep. Edward Royce (R-CA)
Mrs. Marie Royce
The Ambassador
Professional Staffer Doug Roach
Econoff (Notetaker)

19. (U) The CODELs did not have an opportunity to clear this cable before departing post.

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CRETZ